

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8388

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 2312

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINS

SUBJ: FIFTEEN SENTENCED BY MILITARY COURT

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. A MILITARY COURT IN CITY OF SAN FERNANDO HAS PASSED DEATH SENTENCES ON FIVE MEMBERS OF OUTLAWED SOCIALIST PARTY, WHO WERE TRIED FOR CONSTITUTING PARAMILITARY GROUP FORMED WITH INTENTION OF RESISTING ARMED FORCES AFTER RPT AFTER SEPT 11, 1973.

2. TOTAL OF 16 WERE TRIED. TEN RECEIVED PRISONER TERMS RANGING FROM 200 DAYS TO LIFE, AND ONE WAS ACQUITTED, ACCORDING TO REPORTS IN THE SANTIAGO PRESS APRIL 27 AND 28.

3. THE CONDEMNED INCLUDE 2 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BOTH AGE 20, 2 PEASANT LEADERS, AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM CORPORATION (CORA) IN SAN FERNANDO. THEIR DEFENSE LAWYER EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT THE SENTENCES WILL BE REDUCED. REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO THE INTENDENTE (GOVERNOR) OF COLCHAGUA PROVINCE APPEAR TO EMPHASIZE THAT SENTENCES ARE SO FAR ONLY RECOMMENDATIONS OF COURT AND THAT SUBJECTS "WILL HAVE FULL GUARANTEES OF LAW," I.E., REVIEW BY COMMANDER SECOND ZONE, GEN SERGIO ARELLANO. END UNCLASSIFIED

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4. COMMENT. WE THINK IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THESE SENTENCES MAY BE REDUCED. IN FIRST FEW MONTHS AFTER COUP LAW SEPTEMBER, DEATH SENTENCES OF MILITARY COURTS WERE PASSED AND CARRIED OUT WITHIN HOURS. HANDLING OF SAN FERNANDO CASES SUGGESTS BOTH CALMING OF PASSIONS AND INCREASING CONCERN BY GOC FOR PUBLIC OPINION. ALTHOUGH A FEW DEATH SENTENCES HAVE BEEN DECREED, NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF ACTUAL EXECUTIONS HAS BEEN NOTED IN 1974, AND THE LAST "SHOT TRYING TO ESCAPE" CASE OCCURRED IN JANUARY.
POPPER

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